

# Music

There are several online sites that are good sources of Thomas Park's music.

[This document](#) provides a list of, and links to, nearly all non-compilation releases by Thomas Park and his various acts at archive.org. [This document](#) contains links to stream or download nearly all of these aforementioned releases.

[Here](#) is a document containing complete discographies of Thomas' finished projects.

Thomas Park, among various media and disciplines, was primarily a musician. He was known for creating ambient, drone, electroacoustic and other experimental works, which were predominantly available for free as netreleases. Over a period of 15 years, Thomas authored over 5000 original pieces of audio material.

Thomas' main musical projects were AutoCad, Mystified, Mister Vapor, Grid Resistor and Model 201. He also released material as himself (Thomas Park), and under various other monikers.

In 2017, Thomas created a series of short documentaries that detailed his various projects. Below are the texts of these documentaries. They provide a nice summary of Thomas' audio endeavors.

In 2019, Thomas returned to music and began working on Generative, and especially Generative-Iterative songs. This period appears later in the discographies and involves some of the supplemental material at Benchmark: Hub.

## Music By Numbers: The Story Of AutoCad

Thomas Park's first solo music project was called "AutoCad". "Auto", as in automatic, or mechanical, and "Cad", as in a "caddish" type of person-- a lovable oaf.

Early AutoCad experiments involved music that was generated fractally. Thomas used various programs such as Gingerbread, QMuse and Musinum to transform numerical sequences into music. To add to more points of reference, Thomas chose to use the outputs of existing mathematical formulae, or number patterns he found in nature, as seed data. Hence, the musical results were organic outgrowths of pre-existing patterns.

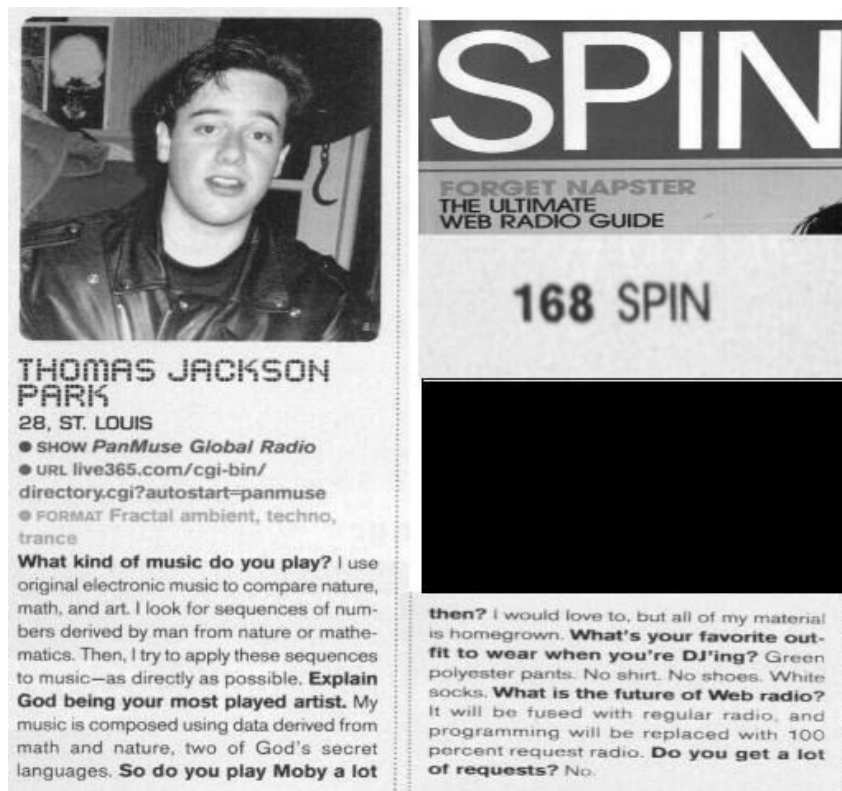
A series of ambient pieces was created using variable star data, which Thomas would retrieve from the AAVSO observatory every day. He used the star data to generate fractal iterations, which were sequenced into longform soundscapes. Towards the end of the 1990's, Thomas

shared these pieces on a radio channel at the Live 365.com online radio site, and called the channel "Our Skies Radio".

At the same time, Thomas began composing by using mathematical and natural sequences as source patterns when pitching and composing industrial loops. He innovated his own kind of fractal techno.

Thomas' fractal techno was released by the popular label, "Pivotal Records", in the release "Logarithm". Tracks from "Logarithm" also were added to a second Live 365.com channel that he called "PanMuse Global Radio". Songs like "NatCos" and "Fibonacci 5" were good examples of this kind of music.

Thomas' 2 radio channels became quickly famous. First, they were featured on the home page of Live 365.com. Then, they became the focus of a short interview in the music magazine "Spin" (November 2000).



Through the early 'oughts, Thomas' star continued to rise as AutoCad, as he became widely popular on music sites such as IUMA, Soundclick and MP3.com . AutoCad was a featured artist on MP3.com, and was dubbed by one listener as "The Best Electronica Artist" on the site.

Thomas continued writing as the techno/electronica act AutoCad, producing material for soundtracks, compilations, collaborations, and various other projects. He broadened his

approach from the mathematical, and used more conventional methods of composing, including using his own voice in many songs.

In 2002, Thomas stopped his project "AutoCad", for 2 main reasons. One was that the name of the act was the same as the title of a type of drafting software, and Thomas feared lawsuits. The other was that he was becoming increasingly influenced by drone music, and was inspired to begin a new project-- the act he came to call "Mystified".

## **Master Of Drone: The Story Of Mystified**

Thomas has attempted to tell the story of mystified, his main music project, many times and in many ways. Whenever he tries to apply too rigid a frame to the story, he loses interest and stops writing quickly.

In synopsis, mystified was a largely ambient drone act that lasted from 2002 to 2017. It was a solo project of Thomas Park. Over the years, it grew to over 5000 pieces of music and sound works, representing one of the largest collections of original audio ever created by a single person.

The whole story seems too tedious to tell. So, what can be listed as some major achievements? The very beginnings of mystified involved a collaborative effort with Robin Storey, of Rapoon fame. Robin used some samples Thomas selected, and created the "Robin Storey Transit Remix". This appeared alongside some mixes made by Thomas using Robin's sounds on the album, "Music For Transit" (Self-Released 2003). "Music For Transit" was sold by consignment on the popular catalog Soleilmoon Records. It was released a number of times, and at one point remastered by Ben Cox of Spotted Peccary Recordings.

Mystified had lots of early success in the netlabel scene, and remained popular on various netlabels throughout its career. The earliest netreleases established a dark, moody sound, often evocative of urban scenes, created using industrial samples. Examples of this period would be "Transient" (Dreamland Recordings 2004) and Cardboard Hotel (Webbed Hand 2004). In 2005, Thomas attempted to create a longform piece that was as minimal as possible, without being difficult to listen to. He was pleased with his result. Thomas called it "Constant" (Webbed Hand 2005). "Constant" was very well-received. It became the inspiration for dozens of other "Constant" pieces by various other artists.

Christopher McDill, of Webbed Hand Records, himself being a musician, was a big influence on Thomas. McDill offered some important advice at pivotal moments in Thomas' career. One such notion was that he start using his own sounds.

Thomas took McDill's advice, and recorded a series of samples with a minidisc recorder. These sounds were presented, either directly, or mixed in various ways, in some of Mystified's very

successful releases such as "South City Spring" (Treetrunk 2006), "Reduced" (Self-Released 2006) and "Nocturne" (Treetrunk 2006).

The use of his own samples helped to propel Mystified for a time into the noise scene. He frequented the famous Troniks bulletin board, and had scores of releases on tape and cdr (as well as netreleases). Thomas' kind of noise usually involved processed field recordings and/or shortwave radio samples. Compositions were often relatively mild and simple in structure. Thomas created enough music in this period to appear in a retrospective, the "MystBox" (Svartgalgh 2009), a metal container holding 25 individual 5" cdrs, each with a distinct album of material.

In 2007, Thomas acquired a copy of the Barrons' master soundwork, the soundtrack to "A Forbidden Planet". He was so impressed that he spent many hours straight creating his own "Tribute To Forbidden Planet" (Roil Noise 2007), which was regarded as one of his more accessible releases.

Having crafted quite a few minimal drone works, Thomas tried applying basic looped beats to them. He was known for this juxtaposition of complex ambient backdrops that featured simple sequences and beats in the foreground, with little melody. A good example of this type of release was "Endless Flutter" (Bump Foot 2009).

In 2009, Thomas was approached by the proprietor of a German Record label. He was asked to create a release for vinyl, which became mystified's well-regarded blue vinyl lp, "Pulse Ringer Pieces" (Droenhaus 2009). The album's shimmering, bittersweet drones appealed to many listeners.

Though Mystified was met with mixed reviews, the project steadily grew in scope and notoriety. Thomas took this very seriously, and continued acquiring better technology to use while creating his music.

A series of releases showcased a higher-fidelity sound, such as "Secret Tapes Remastered" (Treetrunk 2011 ), which included recordings of the voice of President Lyndon Johnson, and "Adventures Of Plunderman Remastered" (Treetrunk 2011 ), which used loops Thomas harvested from vinyl records.

Two phenomena happened at pretty much the same time. Christopher McDill challenged Thomas, having learned that he knew how to play the trombone, to purchase a new horn, and to use it in his recordings. Thomas did so, and what began as his famous "Bone Drone" series (starting on Webbed Hand in 2011), expanded into being a larger influence in developing works, leading eventually to "Epoch" (Spotted Peccary 2012), a major label release in which musician Shane Morris applied Thomas' treated trombone sounds to sculpt drone works with a prehistoric theme.

At about the same time, Thomas became known for being able to create dark, evocative drone tracks using almost anything as source material. Examples used were a recording of the "Star Spangled Banner" ("Star Spangled Banner Outtakes") (Treetrunk 2012), old recordings of polka music ("Polka Drones") (Treetrunk 2012), primitive examples of yodelling ("Yodel Drones") (Treetrunk 2012), and sferics, or atmospheric discharges from the Earth ("EarthWaves") (Earth Mantra 2010).

Thomas courted a more professional career by working with labels such as DataObscura, Hypnos Secret Sounds, and the aforementioned Spotted Peccary Recordings. The folks with Spotted Peccary were particularly encouraging, allowing mystified to work with Shane Morris on the "Inspired Evolution Trilogy", with "Epoch" (Spotted Peccary 2012), "Emergence" (Spotted Peccary 2013) and "Evolution" (Spotted Peccary 2014). These releases had a dark, raw electroacoustic quality quite unusual for the label. Some were better received than others.

During the years 2014 and 2015, Mystified was happily included in 3 "Hearts Of Space" broadcasts. Hearts Of Space is the most highly-regarded ambient radio program in the world. All three appearances involved collaborative efforts-- two appearances were with Nunc Stans, taken from the Nunc Stans and Mystified release, "One Thousand Dreams" (DataObscura 2009), and one was from Shane Morris and Mystified's "Evolution" release (Spotted Peccary Recordings, 2014).

Thomas worked briefly with the very popular dark ambient label "Cryo Chamber". His solo release on Cryo Chamber, "Eschate Thule" (Cryo Chamber 2014), was very different for the label, containing experimental loop constructions. It received mixed reviews from critics. Thomas gradually fell out of favor with the label's proprietor, but did appear on the first 3 Mythos-themed collaborative releases, "Cthulhu" (Cryo Chamber 2014), "Azathoth" (Cryo Chamber 2015) and "Nyarlathotep" (Cryo Chamber 2016). Additionally, a mix Thomas did of various Cryo Chamber tracks, the "Dark Ambient Background Music" mix, was very well-received on YouTube.

Due to some personal changes, Thomas' perspective on music changed at about this time. He met a nice woman, got married, and eventually moved into his first home. Mystified took a back seat, or at least a side seat. Releases became higher in fidelity, and often displayed a sense of humor, such as "K-Tel Hits" (Treetrunk 2015) and "Secret Ops" (Treetrunk 2016).

Mystified's extremely prolific nature eventually resulted in a gradual loss in popularity, and Thomas was aware of the response. He continued writing less seriously.

He returned to some older ideas, re-working them, for a climactic release, "Morning City" (Spotted Peccary 2017). In "Morning City", Thomas combined some of his earlier phonographic recordings and drones with newer instrumental and other sounds, to create a fresh and moving electroacoustic work that the critics really liked.

When "Morning City" received a tepid popular response, Thomas felt that it was time to put the wraps on his mystified project. He officially moved from the role of composer to that of archivist. Shortly afterwards, Robin Storey released another remix using some of Thomas' sounds in his longform drone work "Grasslands Dream Of Electric Sheep" (Tree trunk 2017), which was commissioned to be played in the listening room at the Abraxas Arts Center in Augsburg, Germany.

Thomas' musical achievements as mystified were many, but he will perhaps be best remembered as a popular and generous experimental netlabel artist, with literally hundreds of releases given away for free consumption-- and hundreds of thousands of listens and downloads.

### **Born Of Fog: The Mister Vapor Story**

While writing as mystified, Thomas decided to start a side project. This project would focus on a more vaporous, hazy style of music. In 2009, Thomas released "Vaporous Dawn" (Tree trunk 2009), and Mister Vapor was born.

Many Mister Vapor pieces displayed a particular type of effects chain, in which Thomas transformed field recordings and other sounds first into bell tones, and eventually into wisps and snatches of lightly distorted ambient sound. A track like this is "Slipping The Bonds Of Gravity" (Tree trunk 2009).

"Songs From A Distant Star" (Webbed Hand 2009) was a signature Mister Vapor release. It was quite popular, very well-received. The proprietor of Hypnos Secret Sounds, upon hearing this release, was motivated to form a brief but viable working relationship with Thomas.

The Warped Essence E.P. (Tree trunk 2010) added metallic and rhythmic sounds to the haze. This 3 song e.p. was extremely popular, and was later remastered and re-released. It had thousands of streams and downloads.

Mister Vapor participated in several ongoing projects, such as the "Complex Silence" series, curated by Phillip Wilkerson, the "Constant" series (curated by Thomas himself), and C.P. McDill's "Rain" series, from Webbed Hand Records. The ambient longform style of Mister Vapor lent itself well to such projects.

While writing about Mister Vapor, it is important to mention the project's longest track-- "Beyond The Velvet Sky" (Tree trunk 2013). This release was over 6 hours long. It consisted of gauzy ambient tones that had been created from sferics, or atmospheric discharges from the earth. "Beyond The Velvet Sky" was broadcast several times in its entirety on online radio stations. Each time it was a special event, enjoyed and admired by many.

In 2017, Thomas closed the Mister Vapor project, along with mystified and others of his current audio projects. It remains a viable side-path-- a more ambient, tonal alternative to mystified.

### **Graceful Machines: The Grid Resistor Story**

In 2017, Thomas stopped his main music projects-- and began a new one. It was called "Grid Resistor".

Thomas set some strict rules for his Grid Resistor project. Only the sounds of machines were to be used, as recorded by Thomas himself, in as high fidelity as possible. A contact microphone would be used whenever possible, eliminating extra noise. Each release would be over 60 minutes in length. There would be one release for each letter of the Greek alphabet, named accordingly. Each track would be named after the date it was written and its order on that day. There were 3 main types of machines Thomas used as sound sources.

One was, simply, household machines, such as a printer, a paper shredder, an espresso machine, and so forth. Thomas spent many hours recording ideal samples of these machines, and processing the results into sonic outtakes. Most of Grid Resistor was comprised of household machine sounds. "Xi" (Treetrunk 2017) was a Grid Resistor release that used these sounds as source material.

Some Grid Resistor sounds came from the mechanical sounds found at the beginnings and ends of old tape recordings. These would be, then, the sounds that tape players made, both when they recorded and played sounds back, omitting the "actual" music on the cassettes. "Lambda" (Treetrunk 2017) was a Grid Resistor release that used tape sounds as sources.

A third type of source was a shortwave radio, which Thomas acquired many years ago. Thomas channelled his portable shortwave into a linear recording device and captured the sounds between shortwave bands. Some sounds were purely static, while others were garbled broadcast sounds. Grid Resistor's "Mu" (Cerebral Audio 2017) was a good example of a release that used shortwave sounds.

Grid Resistor's music appeared on a number of netlabels, and in various formats. One release, "Rho", was released as videos only, on Thomas' YouTube channel. The footage for these videos was collected in the urban area near Thomas' home. Thomas used a "near-still life" technique, where his camera remained stationary for long periods of time, and the scenery itself slowly shifted and changed.

The 24th Grid Resistor release was "Omega". "Omega" contained mp3s of all 65 Grid Resistor tracks, available on one page at [archive.org](https://archive.org). Thomas included a playlist link on the release page so that listeners could cue up the entire mp3 collection, and listen to it-- ideally on shuffle and repeat, so that the industrial drone textures could continue playing indefinitely.

The Grid Resistor project inspired a document, which Thomas called the "Machine Music Manifesto". In it he explored ideas of using machines as sources for songs, and suggested that mechanical source material was more appropriate for our current music scene than other sonic sources. The "Machine Music Manifesto" appeared in the art 'zine "Arteidolia" in the late summer of 2017.

Thomas finished the project in 2017. He enjoyed creating the Grid Resistor material. He also liked that the project had such strict guidelines, and that it had a beginning and an end. It made for a strenuous and consistent project, which appealed to many of those who took a chance and listened. Not everyone realized that machines rendered in high-fidelity could sound so soothing and at the same time hold their interest so well.

### **Model 201: A New Case For Old Cassettes**

"Model 201" was a musical project that Thomas Park conceived of in 2017. His method for the project was to rip old Mystified cassettes (Mystified being a previous project of Park's), and then to use these sounds, either directly, or, more commonly, in processed form.

So, Thomas would locate an old mystified cassette release, rip it to 24 bit lossless audio, then transform these ripped sounds using a random effects software. These sounds became the building blocks for Model 201 pieces.

Only sounds created in this manner were used in the Model 201 project.

Analog cassettes have had many returns to popularity over the years. This may seem strange given that they display a lack of audio quality, and that they manifest steady processes of decay.

It was this very phenomenon into which Thomas wanted to tap. He noticed that his cassette releases from the mid 'oughts (and some after) had begun to change sonically. Often, it was difficult, if not impossible, to tell the difference between the audio that had been dubbed onto the cassettes and the sound of the cassette tapes themselves.

Thomas wanted to capture, freeze and reconstitute sounds that were naturally undergoing degenerative processes. He wanted to create a kind of drone music that reflected both his own ear for sounds, and the kind of experience afforded by using analog tapes.

The name for Model 201 comes from an early form of audiocassette player-- one of the first that was effective technically enough to market.

With "The Case", Model 201's final release, Thomas wanted to share all solo non-compilation Model 201 works. Each is present in lossless format. The tracks, which he called "Collages",



exist as "Series" 1-8, in various locations throughout the internet. "The Case" is a hub and a retrospective, available at archive.org's "Community Audio" collection. Through it, listeners may experience all of the many hours of tape-based soundworks Thomas created as Model 201.

Thomas completed the Model 201 project in early 2018. He invites listeners to tune in to the various online releases, in order to experience slowly unfolding, long lasting encounters with Thomas' dark, textured, bassy tape works.

### **The New Industrial: A Short But Active Movement**

In December of 2016, Thomas conceived of a new variety of industrial music. He had been a big fan of industrial music from the 1990's, and missed the energy and excitement of the scene. Just the same, he did not feel that a return to aggressive guitar and synth pieces would be popular. The original modes of the industrial movement had become somewhat familiar, even passe.

What, then, about starting a new phase of industrial music using field recordings? Similar methods had been used in earlier phases of industrial music, by groups such as Einstuerzende Neubauten and Test Department.

Thomas' notion was to begin amassing tracks that used field recordings of urban settings, and particularly more ambient, atmospheric tracks. He wanted to steer clear of the fetishistic aspects of the original movement.

He coined the phrase "New Industrial". He began creating tracks by his own projects along these lines, and put out calls for other artists to contribute, as well. Thomas offered collections of raw and treated field recordings for artists to remix. He penned a manifesto, which was published in his home site as well as in the art zine "Arteidolia", and several other texts that appeared, among other places, on the Encyclotronica music site.

There were particular types of New Industrial tracks collected.

One type involved, simply, raw field recordings of machines or urban environments he had collected, such as "Washing Machine In High Fidelity" and "Shortwave Radio In High Fidelity" (both 2017 Self-Released).

As Mystified, Thomas created New Industrial tracks, by combining phonographic material in ambient sound collages. Tracks like this were "Moral Soup" (which appears in "The Dangerous Kitchen" compilation, (2017 Petroglyph), and "Heavy Shoes" (2016 Treetrunk).

There were some older recordings by Mystified which, he felt, fit into the New Industrial category. Classic phonographic releases like "Nocturne" (2006 Treetrunk) and "Mystical Steam"

(2006 Nishi), written as much as a decade earlier, used mainly urban field recordings as source material.

His newer project Grid Resistor used only machines as source material. Therefore, all Grid Resistor tracks qualified as being New Industrial. For example, "8202017 Five" (2017 Completely Gone Recordings) and "8212017 Two" (2017 Self-Released) fit into this category.

Finally, there were a number of recordings created by other artists. The artist BERTHELOT (2016 Murmure Intemporel) created a longform track using his sound collections, as did Emerge (2016 Self-Released). A larger number of artists contributed to the first and second New Industrial Remix Projects.

The movement had its critics. Some old school industrial fans felt that Thomas was treading on sacred turf by trying to re-awaken industrial music, or suggested that there was nothing new that could be done under the moniker.

In spite of this, the admittedly small movement was fairly popular. The New Industrial playlist on YouTube did very well, and it was observed that the New Industrial movement was picking up momentum.

In 2017, Thomas stopped writing as Mystified and Grid Resistor, and therefore stopped composing New Industrial tracks. However, he still believes in the legitimacy of the idea, and welcomes other artists to pick up the torch where it was left, and to carry it forward, whether with Thomas' sound collections or with their own.

## **Vintage Mystified: Exploring A Noir Essence**

Thomas began the musical project mystified in the year 2002.

He planned to use industrial sounds and various other collected sounds to make ambient drone sample collages. He modelled his composing techniques, in part, after Robin Storey of Rapoon-- Thomas used lots of loops. Some of them were even sounds that Storey had created.

In retrospect, then, the sounds Thomas used during this early period were not all that original. What was unique was this dark, moody sensibility. His vintage works were very noir-- they sounded like dark deeds and misadventures in some mysterious urban environment.

Good examples of this were "Transient" and "Transient 2", which were released on Dreamland Recordings in 2004. These 2 releases contain some of Thomas' earliest and most seminal tracks. "Risk Of Delay" was a good example of a "Transient" track.

Many of these were used once again in the re-release of "Transient" on Latex Records as a cdr in 2005. "What The Rest Meant", from this cdr, was a doleful, melodic tribute to a partially fictional underworld. It evokes feelings of nefarious deals made between dishonorable people. "Cardboard Hotel" (Webbed Hand, 2004) continued in this direction. The title referred to the large boxes that homeless men and women use to keep warm in inclement weather. "Lost Hours" was a track from this release.

Vintage mystified songs often had a dark, dubby quality, with lots of interesting sounds mixed in that resembled tape loops or similar sources, such as the track, "Skyscraper Dub". "Skyscraper Dub" connotes some sad yet ominous cityscape, comprised of tall buildings on a cold, rainy night.

These and similar releases, such as Pirate (2005 Enough Records) and Felon (2005 Enough Records), were extremely popular-- they were essentially the material that got mystified started in a successful direction, particularly in terms of netreleases. Thomas considers them to be amongst the seminal pieces from the mystified project.

When he started using his own sounds, in 2006, Thomas' composing techniques changed, and he evolved in new directions.

### **Strange Sources: Good Things Come From Unusual Places**

In his various audio projects, and mainly as mystified, Thomas was known for creating music using unusual sources. Today's digital culture and creative commons and public domain licenses allow artists to borrow and use various other works as source material for their efforts.

Thomas could not list all of the unusual sound sources he used, but he would like to list a few.

Sferics are atmospheric discharges from the Earth. These sounds are created when lightning strikes. Thomas harvested some sferics streams from a VLF Receiver-- and these were used as source material in a number of songs, including the 6-hour Mister Vapor opus, "Beyond The Velvet Sky" (Treetrunk, 2013).

People seemed very interested in the drones Thomas made using a public domain recording of the Star Spangled Banner (Star Spangled Banner Outtakes, Treetrunk 2012). Thomas might add that he meant no disrespect in creating these outtakes, rather he wanted to provide a different aural perspective on the National Anthem.

At some point, people began to challenge Thomas to use unusual sounds to create his signature drones. One challenge involved polka music. He found some old recordings of polka music and transformed them into ambient soundscapes in "Polka Drones" (Treetrunk 2012 ).

A further challenge involved yodelling. Believe it or not, Thomas was able to find some nice examples of yodel music, and created some deep dronescapes using these examples. (Yodel Drones, Tree trunk 2012).

Thomas dipped into the public pool of music yet again many years later when he created "Mountain Spirits, Ghosts Of Plain", using vintage country songs. This track appeared in a compilation on the Cerebral Audio netlabel called "Into The Rift Volume 1" (Cerebral Audio, 2016 ).

The ever-inspired C.P. McDill of Webbed Hand Records periodically challenged Thomas to expand his sonic palette. At one point, he suggested that Thomas obtain a trombone, having been informed that he was a trombone player in school.

Thomas purchased 2 horns-- first a metal one, then what is called a "P-Bone", which is a trombone made out of plastic. His was blue.

These horns were used to harvest the source material for any numbers of releases, including the well-received "Bone Drone" series on Webbed Hand Records, "Epoch" (Spotted Peccary 2012 ), "Trio Drones" (Petroglyph 2012), and more.

Thomas was so pleased with the process and result of using a real instrument that he began collecting other acoustic sources. He gradually ordered a number of tools and toys, such as a kazoo, a nose flute, a slide whistle, a harmonica, and many others.

Simple instruments such as these could produce, with digital processing, surprising results. Two releases that demonstrate this well are "Life Is A Carnival" (Attenuation Circuit 2012) and "Ferris Spirits" (Self-Released 2012).

To add interest, sometimes Thomas would use combinations of his home-harvested acoustic sounds, from his various instruments, with other, more industrial loops. This worked really well in tracks like "No Path But Ahead" from "Night Wheel" (Audiocast 2012).

As Mystified, Mister Vapor and other projects, Thomas did not always do things the same way. He is glad that he was challenged to try using various and strange audio sources, as they definitely enriched his experience as a musician, and provided listeners with hours of entertainment.

### **The Making Of Mystified's "Morning City"**

As mystified, Thomas was lucky to work with a premier ambient label, "Spotted Peccary Recordings".

In 2012, Thomas began releasing the "Inspired Evolution" trilogy through the label, in collaboration with musician Shane Morris. Shane and he greatly enjoyed working on these albums, and were pleased with the results, and with their reception.

Several years later, Thomas became interested in some musical ideas, and wanted to create a solo release for Spotted Peccary. Particularly, he had been working with urban field recordings, regarding his "New Industrial" movement.

Thomas wanted to create a release that combined urban phonographic sounds with other, more traditionally musical sounds, creating an album both somewhat industrial and listenable. He hoped to make something that would have a broad appeal-- to those who live in cities (of all backgrounds), and to those who love cities. He called this album, "Morning City".

Especially relevant were the sources used in "Morning City". There were several kinds. One was field recordings Thomas had made in my South City apartment a decade earlier. These were recordings of water dripping, nails shaken in a jar, clinking metal, glass and so forth. These raw field recordings were sometimes mixed together using a fractal mixer or processed further using random effects.

A few sounds were simply industrial loops, for which he had a license. Some of the drum loops in the release were of this variety.

Some of the sounds were actual drone pieces Thomas had recorded many years earlier. The drone sounds in the first track, "Down To The Pier", and the last, "Sun Through Afternoon Window", were of this kind.

Finally, there were instrument sounds, which he actually played. There were some trombone drones throughout, which Thomas performed, harvested and recorded. And, there was a very unusual piano melody that he cut up and used in several tracks, including the "On The Fire Escape" pieces.

The piano melody came from an occasion where Thomas was at his in-laws with his wife. Neither of them knew that Thomas could play the piano-- he had very little experience with the instrument. He sat down at his in-laws' piano, and a beautiful, Western melody came out. More unusual was the case that his wife, hearing something she did not expect, recorded most of the improvisation on her mobile phone.

Thomas composed nearly all of the music for "Morning City"-- but he would like to give some kudos to other contributors.

Ben Cox's sound collage "Water" appears on the album. It was a unique electro-acoustic work created using just one of Thomas' samples of flowing water.

Daniel Pipitone created the cover art. He did an amazing job, and Thomas was happy that he integrated both his writings and some of his photography and other visual work in the cover for "Morning City".

The entire crew at Spotted Peccary Recordings was very encouraging, and particularly Howard Givens, who undertook the mastering for the album, and who did such a fabulous job with it.

When "Morning City" came out in 2017, it was well-received critically. Musically, it represented a combination of many types of sounds and methods Thomas had collected and honed over the years.

It was also Thomas' last major release as Mystified. He couldn't think of a better way to bring an end to his 15-year labor of love.

*In 2018, Thomas wrote a brief synopsis of his musical career, from a more subjective, even editorial perspective. Here is that piece:*

## **How To Make A Million Dollars In The Music Industry**

**By Thomas Park**

I will tell no lie, when I first started writing music, I wanted to make money. I idolized djs as a teen, and I wanted to make the kind of music that djs played-- and to become a public figure, with sunglasses and lots of cash.

Adding fuel to the fire were my early successes. The fact was, my approach to music (using fractals, mathematical sequences, and other formulae) was quirky enough that it got some attention, including a few features on prominent websites and a mention in "Spin" Magazine.

I don't think I realized at the time how far away I was from the prototypical dj/dance musician. The images I had of success were borrowed from the lives of people I could never be.

After this initial burst of fame, I spent some time finding myself. My descent happened rather quickly.

I kept spamming my friends about new releases, until one pointed out diplomatically that that was not the kind of e-mail contact they wanted, so I stopped. I joined every possible music site, entered every contest I could. I flailed around crazily in my hoodie sweatshirts, using any means possible to become a famous techno artist. Still, no major label would sign me, and there were no top-40 radio smash hits.

My arc downward somehow, perhaps due to fate, met some arcs upward. In the early 'oughts, there happened to be a growing netlabel scene. My dabblings with noir, atmospheric urban hymns landed me a spot on several up-and-coming netlabels.

At the time, though I realized that I would be making no money from these releases (in the ethos of the creative commons license), I felt that they might be a means to an end. Perhaps more and more people would discover my music this way, and one day, I would become highly successful and make my millions playing for huge crowds.

Netlabels were, in fact, the beginning of the end of my money making schemes. I no longer was netting pay-for-play bucks from mp3.com. I stopped producing special cds through various websites (except for a few such as Mixonic, which allowed me more control over authorship). My first record label turned down additional submissions-- as my music moved towards a darker, more industrial vibe.

In the midst of failure, I found success. Mystified, my then musical act, became very highly regarded in the netlabel scene. Tens of thousands of listeners enjoyed my frequent releases. I developed a following of people (much like myself) who liked strange musics, and preferred not to pay for them.

My urge to succeed had by no means disappeared. I tried many tactics. I rode coattails, working with more successful artists in hopes that their fans would become mine. I offered composing services for little or nothing, investing in strange projects such as a pornographic science-fiction video game, for which I created dozens of theme tracks. None of these were used, as I left the project-- and I assume it was left to fail. I sent scores- perhaps hundreds-- of demos to various labels. I wanted to appear on "professional" cds, perhaps even on vinyl.

I did appear on vinyl at one point, but that was mainly because of my growing acclaim as a netlabel artist. A German label offered me an appearance on a 12" record. The record was a great success artistically and critically, but a total flop in terms of sales. Very few people took a chance on the record, shelling out the money to purchase one.

A few years after the record was released, the label offered me a chance to purchase the remaining copies-- by sending the label my hard cash, they would respond by shipping me an equivalent value in vinyl records (which I had authored).

That was one of the times that I realized that-- as long as my art had nothing to do with money-- there were no problems.

In fact, I could list my conflicts with labels and artists pretty much on one hand-- and they always involved money. Several were with the German label that produced my 12". I think they wanted to milk my act for money. Another was with a small indie cdr label-- there was a misunderstanding when I tried to re-release a remix I had done of a more popular drone artists'

work. The artist noticed what was happening, stepped forward, and raised a fuss. No one was happy about that business (though in some strange way, I felt it was fated).

One problem with making music for money is-- what kind of music are you going to make? I got started in the wrong direction, with mathematics. I moved even further away with stuff that was dark, gloomy, and depressive. My insistence on exploring the darker sides of human experience kept me from making it big commercially.

When I started using my own sounds, this sealed the deal-- that there would be no deal. Some of my most well-received netreleases involve using sounds I recorded in my low-rent urban dive in South Saint Louis. This apartment made for great art, lots of listens-- and no money. Hardly any whatsoever.

I did have strategies for success- though these perhaps might have referred more to artistic success. I knew that I could not do the same things others were doing in the same ways-- unless I did them technically better. I could not afford to do this-- so I did things differently.

I explored the sounds to be found in my poor apartment. I transformed kazoos, nose flutes and similar carnival instruments into drone pieces. I created rhythms-- that were broken, into very odd time signatures. I released sounds I made placing a microphone on my window sill.

One of my most well-used sounds came from a continual set of leaks in my bathroom ,where the sink, toilet and tub conversed with one another all day and all night.

I suppose that's how, deprived of financial success, I became a bit of a poor-man's musician. My songs were for those times when the gas got turned off, or for when the food stamps had been cut-- when there was no steady paycheck, no car.

The less commercially viable I was, the more artistically successful.

There was a rebirth, of sorts. Later in my career, I found employment, and invested in better equipment. I began thinking of music in terms of high fidelity.

I started referencing myself-- or having others reference me. When Shane Morris made a series of dark, primitive dinosaur drones using my trombone sounds, these were released on a prominent ambient label as a professional cd-- and became, in time, part of the "Inspired Evolution" (Spotted Peccary Recordings) trilogy.

In 2017, I looked back on my years of writing about poverty, and made, "Morning City" (2017 Spotted Peccary Recordings)-- which used as source material the very recordings I had taken of my low-rent apartment, as well as drones from earlier periods when I cared less about fidelity. These early sounds were treated like gold-- they were rendered to extremely high bitrates, and



mastered by a true professional. They were released on the same prominent ambient label as the “Inspired Evolution” trilogy.

I am happy to say, then, that when I really “sold out” in music, I only sounded more like myself.

And, looking back, I would much rather have a body of work that reflects real moods, atmospheres and situations than something that used a ton of equipment and was a product of glib or cynical fantasy.

Nowadays, I am retired from music. I believe that art and money should have little to do with one another. I work a day job for income.

For enjoyment, I spend hours listening to the products of my years attempting to prove otherwise.

*In 2018, Thomas liberated a large number of his works to the public domain. Here is an essay in which he discusses this process:*

## **Public Domain: The Day I Gave Out**

### **An essay by Thomas Park**

I am not sure if you have read my essay, “How To Make A Million Dollars In The Music Industry”? In it, I tell a story about how, when first writing music, I wanted to make a lot of money. My goal was to be a famous dj-type. I tried, later, to sell my music via cd, download, cassette, vinyl, stream, and other means.

None of these methods were very lucrative.

I was convinced that the quality of my music wasn’t the problem-- it was the state of the music industry. More recently I heard news about how famous musicians made only pennies from streaming services in their annual checks.

Many suggest that the music industry as we know it is dying or dead.

In the aforementioned essay, I also bring up the subject of netlabels. Releasing my music via creative commons license was a successful technique for gaining listeners. By giving my music away for free, I enabled thousands of people to enjoy my creations without having to shell out any cash.

I had to sacrifice my goal of making lots of money this way, but helped in other ways.

For years, a large collection of my music was available online at various netlabels. This collection was, for the most part, gratis. The only constraints involving obtaining or using the works were delineated by a Creative Commons license.

The most common license I used placed only one restriction on use of my music-- "Attribution". People who remixed, broadcast, or otherwise utilized my works had only to mention that they came from me, that I was their creator.

Yesterday, for many of these works, this changed.

I asked myself-- why place restrictions on my works? Why did I really create them?

I imagined them entering a larger sea of media, and being made available there freely and for any use. People could cut them up, play them backwards, use them in radio shows. They could feature them in commercials, open sporting events with them. What if they could do all of that, without any stipulations?

I felt that disseminating my works was more vital than gaining name recognition. I wondered, after all, if everytime my name was mentioned, a bell somewhere rang. I had my doubts about that.

Having considered these things, I made a large number of my works public domain. Most of my solo material appearing either in community collections at [archive.org](http://archive.org) or in the Treetrunk Netlabel are now available for free use, without restrictions.

These of my works, then, I give to the community at large. They are free to use and enjoy without dropping my name.

I hope that they find their way out into the world, making people happy, supplying them with complimentary culture to satisfy whatever need they may.

I have to say, giving out feels great.



To see a list of links to these public domain works, feel free to visit:

[https://archive.org/download/ThomasParkBenchmarkHub/09\\_Public\\_Domain\\_Items\\_By\\_Thomas\\_Park.pdf](https://archive.org/download/ThomasParkBenchmarkHub/09_Public_Domain_Items_By_Thomas_Park.pdf)

*Thomas was frequently referred to as being “prolific”. Thomas wrote, in 2018, a short essay on the subject, in which he discussed the pros and cons of being known for creating a lot of material.*

### **On Being Prolific An Essay By Thomas Park**

As an experienced musician, I would love to tell you that I am best known for my composition techniques. Or, maybe people loved my work because I play instruments well.

What folks mention more than anything else is-- that I am prolific.

There are literally dozens of reviews in which I am referred to as being prolific. Some mention only that, or nearly so.

It's a mixed bag, to be honest. I am glad to be hard-working. I love composing, I love recording. I get a lot of joy out of creating music. It shouldn't be a surprise that I create a lot of it.

On the other hand, I'd love to be known for creating music of a certain quality.

To be sure, Thomas Park's music does have certain qualities. It's always done with a good ear for sound. It never has clipping (where the recording was made at too high a volume). There are

certain styles and subjects that occur again and again, such as living in the city, industrial influences, a style of drone, and other aspects.

It would be more meaningful to me if people referred to particular works in my catalog, or types of them. "I really enjoyed Thomas' early phonographic phase", for example, or, "I liked it when he made all of those longform tracks using sferics as source material".

I don't mean to whine. To be remembered at all is perhaps more than a person can expect, in this busy world of billions of people.

How to make lemonade from lemons? Suffice it to say, that, when a musician is prolific, this might be an indication that they learned and grew a lot through their creative endeavors. That much was written may not necessarily mean that most was bad, or should be discarded.

In fact, a good way to experience a prolific artist's work is by approaching it as a whole, as a collection. One piece often relates to another, or to others.

With my music, a person with a good ear can hear, through the many works, a development, over the years, in regards to sound quality, subtlety, intonation, and other characteristics.

After all, when a person loves something, they will tend to keep doing it. And a prolific artist may end up becoming very, very good at the certain things with which they are concerned.

Perhaps it's no coincidence that my favorite painter is Paul Klee, who created over 9000 visual works in his lifetime.

I really don't believe in the trope of the isolated genius who spontaneously creates a singular masterwork. (Though artists often have certain pieces that are most popular, or most often heard).

I do believe in the ideal of a determined and committed artist, who tries and tries again, regardless of criticism, for their love of the process, their talent achieving aesthetic quality, and for their desire to make the world a better place-- to make life more livable.

So, artists, what's your excuse? Nowadays, you probably have a computer, if not several, and all kinds of digital tools at your disposal. You quite likely have the capacity to create many thousands of works.

If I can create over 5000 soundworks-- if Paul Klee can draw and paint over 9000 pictures-- how about you?

Take up the challenge. Become one in a growing body of artists we can call "prolific".

Wear the term with pride, as a testament to your hard work.

I will do the same.

*Thomas created a fair share of techno music. He had some unique perspectives on the genre-- in this essay he discusses a few of them.*

## **When Thomas Park Made Techno**

*This document contains references to tracks that can be found in this free release:*

<https://archive.org/details/ThomasParksTopTechnoTracks>

As the electronica project AutoCad, Thomas created many hundreds of techno tracks. For the most part, they were either simple, catchy and very melodic, or based on mathematical equations (such as the track "Ennex 3000"). The math-based tracks did very well, especially at first, landing Thomas a spot in "Spin" Magazine (11/2000).

When Thomas became mystified, he returned to creating techno from time to time.

Much mystified techno was "tweaked", showing a dark sense of humor. Phrases would begin and abruptly end. A lone percolation would sound in the middle of a still section of a piece. Things would seem too much a certain way-- perhaps, even, too perfect. Examples of this kind of composing can be found in Thomas' "Dubstep Odyssey" (2013 Treetrunk Records) e.p..

Repetition was a common element. Writing techno with the use of loops made repetition quite simple to generate. Thomas attenuated this principle further-- sometimes, one riff, one phrase, would become the essence of an entire track. A good example of this technique can be found in the piece "On And On".

Thomas enjoyed collaborating, and many of his techno pieces used sounds that were assembled by other artists. Thomas struck a great synergy with certain artists, such as Christopher McDill and Christopher Alvarado. These constructive artistic relationships resulted in the creation of a great deal of material. "The Mystical Recursion Remixes" (2016 Treetrunk Records) are good examples of this, as are pieces from "I Believe I Will As Well" (2018 Self-Released).

To say that Thomas Park did not take techno music seriously would be inaccurate. Every piece was made to certain standards, and great efforts were taken for them to sound a particular way. That being said, Thomas was not beyond referencing technologies in ways that shed light on assumptions made by many techno artists.

Although Thomas felt that using industrial loops in a simple loop mixing console might not be unusual or outstanding enough to propel him to fame and success, his efforts in this direction are a testament to hours of effort, and demonstrate certain distinctive modes and styles.

*Thomas shared some reflections concerning his solo project, "Grid Resistor", in June of 2018. Grid Resistor was an act in which only machine sounds were used as source material.*

## **Some Thoughts On Grid Resistor**

Part of the notion was, with this act, to create something very strenuous and mechanical. Because only machine sounds were used, the pieces suggest-- "What if sonic environments were made using only machines?".

I was curious, too, as to the result.

For me, when I listen to Grid Resistor, I find it to be interesting and oddly relaxing.

However, after a period of time, I begin to feel uncomfortable.

It's like being in any artificial environment-- it can be very pleasing and comfortable, up to a point-- but then, a person tends to run off to the woods or mountains-- one douses one's head in a running stream.

Indeed, as Grid Resistor is devoid of nature, generally-- nature cries out against it. Its mechanical attributes provide an attenuated view of today's world, which is increasingly technological. It feeds our ears and minds with machine sounds-- indeed for as long as the human being can stand.

Which is not forever.

One may take from this what one will.